

Truth Amidst Tension:

The Practical Apologetic Methodology of Francis Schaeffer

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Introduction

First, I would like to start by providing a bit of introduction to the book this paper is connected to in its namesake, *Truth Amidst Tension: The Practical Apologetic Methodology of Francis Schaeffer*. The premise thereof, is that despite Francis Schaeffer's apologetic having been considered by some to be one of the most significant contributions to the Christian defense of the faith in the Twentieth Century, in many ways, and rather surprisingly, the fine details of his methodology is still largely unknown by many in the Christian world. Some may know that Dr. Schaeffer is significant, but they may not realize how helpful he is. One of the primary causes for this may perhaps rest in the nature of Dr. Schaeffer's influence. Whereas Dr. Schaeffer was more of a popularizer-apologist rather than a traditional academic apologist, his methods were never explicitly systematized. That is, he does not have a specific volume entitled, "Schaeffer's Apologetic" that one could simply appeal to. Additionally, when an inquirer wants to read a book on Schaeffer's apologetic, the various works available, as good as they are, are heavily obligated to deal with the various academic debates over Apologetic classification and concerns others have raised about Schaeffer's approach. As a result, less time is dealt with explaining what Dr. Schaeffer means, or unpacking the numerous statements he has made in various places. Therefore, the author has chosen at the outset to not focus on the various classification

debates that have often been proven to be a barrier to those approaching the study. Rather, there has been a concerted focus on developing the broader explanation of what Dr. Schaeffer's practical apologetic contribution is. In the end, the goal is to provide the given content to the Francis Schaeffer community and ultimately, the Christian church at large, to assist in making Dr. Schaeffer's thought, teachings and apologetic more accessible for general inquiry. Yet, more than this, to strengthen the work of apologetics and evangelism and ultimately, further the kingdom of Christ.

In this paper, I will first take time to connect the aspect of our conference theme to Dr. Schaeffer's thought, then I'll provide a summary of some of the relevant portions that relate directly to the book. Then I will explain some new material that addresses our current cultural condition.

True Truth

Now, I feel that it is significant to speak to the topic of our conference this year. The topic is of course, "Engaging the Culture with True Truth." The specific usage of the phrase "True Truth" in the title is in fact a Schaefferism. Some might be surprised that I, being one who yearly lectures on Dr. Schaeffer, was not the one to suggest it. Yet, I was overjoyed when it was chosen.

So what does Dr. Schaeffer mean by the notion of True-Truth? Dr. Schaeffer thankfully provides a bit of a definition:

It is an important principle to remember, in the contemporary interest in communication and in language study, that the biblical presentation is that though we do not have

exhaustive truth, we have from the Bible what I term “true truth.” In this way we know true truth about God, true truth about man, and something truly about nature. Thus on the basis of the Scriptures, while we do not have exhaustive knowledge, we have true and unified knowledge.¹

So as we contemplate this, we can see that the term is intended to elevate something of the truth of the unified revelation about God, ourselves, and the world that He has made. Very often Dr. Schaeffer will mention in his works, “the universe and it’s forms” and “the mannishness of man” which terms speak of God’s particular revelation. Here is another statement by Dr. Schaeffer on the matter of true truth:

The Bible and Christ in His office of prophet have given a propositional, verbalized communication to men that is true about God, true about history, and true about the cosmos. This should not take us by surprise, for if God has made man in His own image and has made us so that we can verbalize facts propositionally to each other on a horizontal level of communication, then it is natural that the infinite God who is personal would also communicate vertically to man in the same way. Of course, we must be careful to make a distinction here. Although God has not given us exhaustive knowledge (only He is infinite), He has given us true knowledge (what I have often called true truth)—true knowledge about Himself, about history, and about the cosmos.²

¹ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p 219 (*Escape from Reason*)

² Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p120 (*The Church Before the Watching World*)

Additional examination of the usage of the phrase “true truth” in Dr. Schaeffer’s works gives us additional information. We find that namely, the term thoroughly in contrast to relativistic notions of truth:

It must be understood that the new humanism and the new theology have no concept of true truth—absolute truth. Relativism has triumphed in the church as well as in the university and in society. The true Christian, however, is called upon not only to teach truth, but to practice truth in the midst of such relativism. And if we are ever to practice truth, it certainly must be in a day such as ours.³

As we can see here Dr. Schaeffer also elaborates that the notion is of “absolute truth.” Some will note right away that this concept is an appeal to objective truth versus relativism or notions of subjective truth. It is a truth that is true all the time. Moreover, Schaeffer further equates another of his Schaefferisms with it, namely, something he also often said, “flaming truth.”

Historic Christianity, biblical Christianity, believes that Christianity is not just doctrinal truth, but flaming truth—true to what is there, true to the great final environment, the infinite-personal God.⁴

It is the opinion of the author, that in context, this concept is meant to convey the vibrant nature of truth (revelation) to existence and God Himself. The particular notion of

³ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books.p356 (*The Great Evangelical Disaster*)

⁴ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p356 (*The Great Evangelical Disaster*)

“flaming truth” in Schaeffer’s usage, seems to further convey the aspects of this truth being a burning, refining fire that purifies, that strips away false notions of truth. This truth cannot be quenched. It is a burning fire that needs to be proclaimed to the world.

We not only believe in the existence of truth, but we believe we have the truth—a truth that has content and can be verbalized (and then can be lived)—a truth we can share with the twentieth-century world. Christ and the Bible have given us this truth. Do you think our contemporaries will take us seriously if we do not practice truth? Do you think for a moment that the really serious-minded twentieth-century young people—our own youth as they go off to universities, who are taught in the fields of sociology, psychology, philosophy, etc., that all is relative—will they take us seriously if we do not practice truth in very practical ways? In an age that does not believe that truth exists, do you really believe they will take seriously that their parents are speaking truth and believe in truth? Will their parents have credibility if they do not practice antithesis in religious matters?⁵

With Dr Schaeffer, there is rarely an idle word. He is regularly hammering out an understanding and his words are loaded with intent. As we can gather from the quotes provided, Dr. Schaeffer wishes us to bring True-Truth into contact with the world!

Truth in Tension

Now, as it relates to the title of this paper, and the title of my book, *Truth Amidst Tension*, True-Truth is the standard, it is the reality of both what God has made and

⁵ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p356 (*The Great Evangelical Disaster*)

Himself. Simply put, Dr. Schaeffer believed that it is impossible for the non-Christian to live consistently with True-Truth. It is impossible for him to live consistently with the real world that God has made. It is even impossible for him to even live consistently with his own person. Thus, the non-Christian is in tension.

Non-Christian presuppositions simply do not fit into what God has made, including what man is in a place of tension. Man cannot make his own universe and then live in it⁶

...No non-Christian can be consistent to the logic of his presuppositions. The reason for this is simply that man must live in reality, and the reality consist of two parts: the external world and its form, and man's 'mannishness,' including his own 'mannishness. No matter what man may believe, he cannot change the reality of what is. As Christianity is the truth of what is there, to deny this, on the basis of another system, is to stray from the real world.⁷

Did you catch that? Since "...Christianity is the truth of what is there, to deny this, on the basis of another system, is to stray from the real world." Dr. Schaeffer puts it most distinctly, where man is in conflict with the real world, in any of his usage of another system of truth, tension exists. This ranges from simple unbelief in the Creator to various common inconsistencies in thought. We find that he constructs a flawed worldview with flawed presuppositions around himself. This happens both on a personal and cultural level. Dr. Schaeffer highlighted that these places of tension are areas where we can speak.

If the man before you were logical to his non-Christian presuppositions, you would have no point of communication with him. It would be impossible to have

⁶ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p133. (*The God Who Is There*)

⁷ Ibid.

communication if he were consistent. But in reality no one can live logically according to his own non-Christian presuppositions, and consequently, because he is faced with the real world and himself, in practice you will find a place where you can talk. He would not be where he is, suspended between the real world and the logical conclusions of his presuppositions, if he were consistent.⁸

We should also note that in as much as man honors God's creation, even though he has no basis for doing so, he should be commended. This also is a place where we can speak as we acknowledge the beauty of coexistence with existence. As Jerram Barrs highlights in his Apologetics material presented at Covenant Seminary, this also is an area where we can speak. Where he is consistent with the world God has made, he is not in tension with the world, but in tension with his own system and with God for not acknowledging Him. Here it may be possible to speak and commend him, but ask him on what basis he holds the consistency we identify. In my book, *Truth Amidst Tension*, I provide the following personal anecdote as an example:

I was talking to an atheist friend and one thing that I have realized is that he is passionately full of opinions and positions about how things should and should not be in society. In fact, this is true of most atheists that I have talked to. So I first acknowledged this and praised him for it. Then secondly, I asked him a very pointed question. I said, "I can see that you believe this is how we ought to treat others. I wholeheartedly agree. However, while I know why I, as a Christian, believe we ought to treat each other this way, I however, do not know on what basis you believe that people ought to treat each other this way." The conversation also eventually led to the inverse discussion as well. I said, "I agree with you that the abuses that you mentioned are wrong, yet I do not know on what basis you believe that these abuses are wrong." This is a matter of not

⁸ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p137. (*The God Who Is There*)

necessarily rebuttal, but of directing their attention to acknowledge the real world. They see the good, but they don't know the basis for it. They see the bad, but they don't have the basis for judgment of it. It is our job to call them to acknowledge the reality before them. That reality is part of God's revelation to them, and it is speaking!⁹

In the book, I highlight the fine details of the development of Dr. Schaeffer's methods which have inspired this sort of questioning. The book provides some guidelines and warnings that are significant for apologists to note. Dr. Schaeffer was very concerned that his methods not be used in a way that treats man like an animal/machine. We must contend with the modern dilemmas of man in a way that is not only logically truthful but spiritually truthful as well. Here are some basic guidelines about the usage of

Schaeffer's apologetic:

- It should never be used in a mechanical way
- It should never treat men like mere animal/machines
- It should always be done with truth and love
- It should be done with a noticeable demonstration of beauty

I will share a brief segment on the last point of beauty as people may not know exactly what is meant.

...despite what some might be apt to think, Schaeffer's grasp of the apologetic value of beauty is not just about aesthetics. His works in general are not just relegated to one sphere either. In fact, a survey of his entire works would show that he only wrote one small book specifically on art, and his works cover everything from pollution to government. As to his apologetics, with respect to beauty, it is also not just about "art with a capital A," as Dr. Schaeffer describes. He was not trying to just make a mere art apologetic. Rather, Dr. Schaeffer's apologetic of beauty is an all inclusive notion of "beauty realized" in contrast to a fallen world. This beauty is not just the physical things that we can see, although it includes those as well, but more significantly includes the

⁹ Guinn, Dan. *Truth Amidst Tension*, Francis Schaeffer Studies. p63.

beauty of the light of Creation and Revelation and also the light of the results of the Gospel. Dr. Schaeffer was concerned that in all our apologetic fervor, we were prone to miss the human beings before us and the relationship to the beauty that is. Thus, what he called, “the beauty of human relationships,” can have lasting implications, but also has a distinct context.¹⁰

One of the most astounding things to understand is the contrast. True beauty stands in stark contrast to the natural end of the non-Christian’s presuppositions.

...the more they become aware of humanity the more they realize its facelessness. Out of this springs a real fear of the impersonal, and they are right to be afraid.¹¹

In reality, the facelessness and the impersonal are tragic pains of being in conflict with True Truth. When people realize that they are not only in tension, but their worldview has no real basis for even defining what is good or evil, like my Atheist friend, they are left very often with great despair.

In this next section I would like to examine how we connect these methods to our day and age that is essentially what Dr. Schaeffer forecasted. This portion is new material, which shows the implications of the methods of *Truth Amidst Tension* when applied to the tensions in our time.

Tensions in Our Time

What are the tensions of our time? One may respond by simply asking us to open our eyes, turn on the news, or just scroll through social media. Tension is all around us.

¹⁰ Guinn, Dan, *Truth Amidst Tension, Francis Schaeffer Studies* p55.

¹¹ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Three, A Christian View of Spirituality*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 332. (Book *True Spirituality*)

Moreover, if we are caring people, we are often moved and burdened by all of the tensions and falsehoods that are prevalent in our culture. Dr. Schaeffer foresaw much of what was coming in our generation. Here are some examples:

Social Media & Digital Manipulations

Dr. Schaeffer was regularly mindful of the developments in media and was actively listening to those whom he came into contact with who had things to say about it. Additionally, he listened to their “prophets” and further read and consumed the materials they published, which included various works as well as following current events. Consider what Dr. Schaeffer was saying about the computer in a section of *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century* on “Chemical and Electrical Manipulation” should sound familiar to us, in an archaic sense:

...the computer itself can be dangerous. The computer has entered into a new age: it can watch you. The great eye can be upon you—recording every single thing you do from your birth to your death. This too is not tomorrow; it is ready today. One computer expert on the West Coast, a man who has as many basic computer patents as anybody in the world, has become so disturbed by the big, all-recording banks of computers that he is spending the end of his life trying to make little inexpensive computers so that men can fight the big computers. The existence of the computer and the control it puts into the hands of those in power steps up the power of each of the forms of modern manipulation in the hands of the manipulators.¹²

Here we can see, something of the forecast of what we now call “social media” and the power of the computers. Unfortunately, we can now see the man on the West Coast mentioned by Dr. Schaeffer could not have known that the invention of the smaller computers would have the inverse effect. We are now connected to the larger server

¹² Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p362. (*Back to Freedom & Dignity*)

farms due to the machines on our arms such as the digital watch I am wearing and those in our phones. These machines have more computing power than the computers that were on the first lunar mission. They are recording our lives, from birth to death, displayed on our social media timelines.

While many understood the potential, Dr. Schaeffer further understood better than most. He takes it a step further. Here is another excerpt elsewhere of his understanding:

Consider Marshall McLuhan's concept that democracy is finished. He says there is coming a time in the global village (not far ahead, in the area of electronics) when we will be able to wire everybody up to a giant computer, and what the computer strikes as the average at a given moment will be what is right and wrong. You may say that is far-fetched and there may never be such a worldwide computer system. But the concept of morals only being the average of what people are thinking and doing at a given time is a present reality.¹³

In this case, we can see that Dr. Schaeffer was true on both accounts. Now being controlled by digital electronic manipulation is one thing, but the notion eventually builds to what is today known as Transhumanism, where technology so shapes one's life that mankind is remade. Dr. Schaeffer highlighted early trends, such as Arthur Koestler who advocated putting chemicals in the drinking water to make man more passive, and Dr. Kenneth Clark who believed in a pill for peace. Koestler would further suggest ". . . biochemical manipulation to insure the dominance of the brain's rational cortex over the irrational, animal-like 'old-cortex.' Why despair of the possibility of stabilizing people, of harmonizing them without really castrating them, without sterilizing them mentally."

Dr. Schaeffer's lays out elsewhere a proper response which is so significant:

...men today can no longer answer that crucial question, "Who am I?" In his own naturalistic theories, with the uniformity of cause and effect in a closed system, with an evolutionary concept of a mechanical, chance parade from the atom to man, man has

¹³ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p273 (*He is There and He is Not Silent*)

lost his unique identity. As he looks out upon the world, as he faces the machine, he cannot tell himself from what he faces. He cannot distinguish himself from other things.

Quite in contrast, a Christian does not have this problem. He knows who he is. If anything is a gift of God, this is it—knowing who you are. As a Christian, I know my differentiation. I can look at the most complicated machine that men have made so far or ever will make and realize that though the machine may do some things that I cannot do, I am different from it. If I see a machine that is stronger than I am, it doesn't matter. If it can lift a house, I am not disturbed. If it can run faster than I can, its speed doesn't threaten me. If I am faced with a giant computer which can never be beaten when it plays checkers—even when I realize that never in history will I or any man be able to beat it—I am not crushed. Others may be overwhelmed intellectually and psychologically by the fact that a man can make a machine that can beat him at his own games, but not the Christian.

The Christian knows that in the flow of history, man comes from a different origin. It is not that God has not made both man and the great machine of the universe, but that He has made man different from the rest of the universe. And that which differentiates man from the machine is that his basic relationship is upward rather than downward or horizontal. He is created to relate to God in a way that none of the other created beings are.¹⁴

It is here that Dr. Schaeffer brings True-Truth into the tension of the real world. We know who we are, we know the meaning of what God has made. We know who God is. We have a response. It is our position in the created order that stands against the tension. Where modern man stands in relation to these matters of cultural and technological manipulation is a place of despair. We must question them, “On what basis do you stand...?” as they must see that on the basis of their own systems, they stand in thin air.

¹⁴ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Two, A Christian View of the Bible as Truth*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p32 (*Genesis in Space and Time*)

Prophetic Tensions: Race, Marxism, Riots & Social Justice

Dr. Schaeffer further understood the racial tensions we have experienced, both on their racial level and on their manipulative level:

...our Christianity must become truly universal, relevant to all segments of society and all societies of the world.

Why are we in trouble with the blacks? Simple. When white evangelical Christians held the consensus, they did not have enough care and compassion for the blacks to care for them in practical ways. Not that the white evangelical church should have made the blacks white or converted them to a mode of living dominated by “white” historical accidents. But the white Christians should have so loved them that they shared with them Christianity and all that flows from it, and this should have included social justice, but also making sure that the black pastors had as good a theological training as the white pastors.¹⁵

It is important to note that Dr. Schaeffer’s usage of the language “social justice” is not in the Marxist form. In as much as Dr. Schaeffer loved people of all races, he also knew the problem of Marxism and its uses. He is addressing the problem on a racial historical principle alone. Note how he also foresaw the usage of civil disobedience and Marxism:

...speaking of civil disobedience is frightening...That is, with the prevalence of Marxist thinking--and especially with the attempted synthesis of Marxism and Christianity in certain forms...what we are saying could become a Marxist and terrorist tool to bring anarchy. Or in a similar vein, it could become a tool to impose by force the humanist world view resulting in the loss of humanness and in some form of authoritarianism.¹⁶

Dr. Schaeffer is so mindful of the means of manipulation that was possible that it sounds like he was speaking the day before the BLM and Antifa riots in our nation. He knew of the possibility of manipulation and also the racial tensions and unrest of civil

¹⁵ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p90. (*The Mark of a Christian*)

¹⁶ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Five, A Christian View of the West*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p488. (*Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*)

disobedience. Nevertheless, Dr. Schaeffer proposes an answer that is beyond the scope of political or social justice movements. The solution is historic Christian community:

Don't start a big program. Don't suddenly think you can add to your church budget and begin. Start personally and start in your homes. I dare you. I dare you in the name of Jesus Christ. Do what I am going to suggest. Begin by opening your home for community.

I have seen white evangelicals sit and clap their heads off when black evangelicals get up to talk at conference times. How they clap! That's nice, because twenty years ago the evangelicals would not have been clapping. But I want to ask you something if you are white. In the past year, how many blacks have you fed at your dinner table? How many blacks have felt at home in your home? And if you haven't had any blacks in your home, shut up about the blacks. On the basis of Scripture, open your home to the blacks and if they invite you, go with joy into their homes. Have them feel at home in your home. Then you will be able to begin to talk with them, but not before, and your church can jump across this division as it should. And if you are a black Christian, it all cuts equally the other way: how many whites have you invited to your home in the last year? How many have eaten at your table?¹⁷

This of course is very convicting, however, we need to take it to heart. The testimony of what Dr. Schaeffer called, "the beauty of human relationships" should be the mark of the church and should be the mark of Christians. Marxism does not own the premise of love across racial divides, Christianity is the true owner. Furthermore, there is nothing unorthodox about loving others of different skin color than our own. Christianity has always been multicultural from the beginning! When we demonstrate unity and love across racial divisions we destroy the world's notions of division. May it be our demonstration to the watching world!

¹⁷ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p90. (*The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*)

Global Tensions: Worldview, Health & Government

As we think about the current cultural worldviews and the aspect of health and pandemic, it is often hard to come to terms with what is real and what is fiction. What is manipulation? What is conspiracy theory? What is fact? Dr. Schaeffer points out that in his time, much of what we are seeing was already marching forward. We need in the least be aware of the potential:

Recently a generation has arisen that has taken these theories out of the lab and classroom and into the streets. Its members have carried the reduction of the value of human beings into everyday life. Suddenly we find ourselves in a more consistent but uglier world—more consistent because people are taking their low view of man to its natural conclusion, and uglier because humanity is drastically dehumanized.¹⁸

In context, Dr. Schaeffer is speaking to the abortion and euthanasia question, yet it is obvious that there was a constant push toward the dehumanization of humanity:

The medical and scientific professions are not the only culprits. Popular apathy in general and small negatively active groups in particular have contributed much to the demise of the unique worth of humanity. Members of the government as well as the press have also shut their eyes or simply drifted along, having no firm moral base themselves. But the main culprit is the humanistic consensus, which declares man to be a machine and demotes his unique worth in his own eyes.¹⁹

Dr. Schaeffer saw this push as being realized in what he called “sociological law” wherein such dehumanizing philosophies could be implemented and forcefully governed.

Sociological law: the law becomes what a few people in some branch of the government think will promote the present sociological and economic good. In reality the will and

¹⁸Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Five, A Christian View of the West*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p338 (*Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*)

¹⁹ Ibid.

moral judgments of the majority are now influenced by or even overruled by the opinions of a small group of men and women. This means that vast changes can be made in the whole concept of what should and what should not be done. Values can be altered overnight and at almost unbelievable speed.²⁰

The push of such concepts are before us. We see them daily. Sociological law is trumping human dignity and freedom. Large portions of the government and press are in fact drifting along with the current narrative and the inhumane humanistic consensus. With the aforementioned media manipulation as its blatant monitoring of the popular arbitrary absolutes and shifting tribalist agendas are taking their toll on humanity.

Silent Tensions: Personal Peace & Affluence:

Dr. Schaeffer regularly challenged us to acknowledge its own tensions. We must acknowledge that our current sin is apathy. Our apathy is driven by selfishness. We, like Martin Luther desire to “live in days of peace and quiet and be undisturbed” as we drive toward material abundance:

Gradually that which had become the basic thought-form of modern people became the almost totally accepted viewpoint, an almost monolithic consensus. And as it came to the majority of people through art, music, drama, theology, and the mass media, values died. As the more Christian-dominated consensus weakened, the majority of people adopted two impoverished values: personal peace and affluence.

Personal peace means just to be let alone, not to be troubled by the troubles of other people, whether across the world or across the city—to live one’s life with minimal possibilities of being personally disturbed. Personal peace means wanting to have my personal life pattern undisturbed in my lifetime, regardless of what the result will be in the lifetimes of my children and grandchildren. Affluence means an overwhelming and

²⁰ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Five, A Christian View of the West*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p286 (Whatever Happened to the Human Race?)

ever-increasing prosperity—a life made up of things, things, and more things—a success judged by an ever-higher level of material abundance.²¹

It is important to see the climate we ourselves are in. We want peace and we want prosperity. These values in themselves are not wrong, but when they overcome our propensity for compassion and the love for others, we are not effective. We should firmly reject the notion of Marxist “white privilege” and “white guilt” being imposed by some, as it simply labels with humanistic labels the perceived oppressors until the oppressed come to be the new oppressors. Our identity is not in the humanistic Marxist paradigm, but in Christ alone. Therefore, in true reverence to our Lord, we should also be honest to what has often blinded many of us in the church from sensing the hurt of our culture. As people we have often over privatized ourselves and stored up idle treasure and entertainment, while the world has grown more and more destructive. We must find our way to both repentance and action. May we embrace our identity in Christ as lights and servants to the needy in this world. May God grant us this! May we be like Luther stating, “Here I stand, I can do no other!”

Truth With Tears

All of this will require compassion and empathy both for our world as well as for the state of the church. Dr. Schaeffer instructs that our attitude must be sober minded and tearful given the ground we have lost:

...accommodation has been costly, first in destroying the power of the Scriptures to confront the spirit of our age; second, in allowing the further slide of our culture. Thus we must say with tears that it is the evangelical accommodation to the world spirit around us, to the wisdom of this age, which removes the evangelical church from standing against the further breakdown of our culture. It is my firm belief that when we stand before Jesus Christ, we will find that it has been the weakness and accommodation of the evangelical group on the issues of the day that has been largely responsible for the

²¹ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Five, A Christian View of the West*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p211 (*How Should We Then Live?*)

loss of the Christian ethos which has taken place in the area of culture in our own country over the last forty to sixty years.²²

Where is the clear voice speaking to the crucial issues of the day with distinctively biblical, Christian answers? With tears we must say it is not there and that a large segment of the evangelical world has become seduced by the world spirit of this present age. And more than this, we can expect the future to be a further disaster if the evangelical world does not take a stand for biblical truth and morality in the full spectrum of life. For the evangelical accommodation to the world of our age represents the removal of the last barrier against the breakdown of our culture. And with the final removal of this barrier will come social chaos and the rise of authoritarianism in some form to restore social order.²³

Likewise, as we consider that correction must come to the church, we also must remember Dr. Schaeffer's instruction on how it should be done:

We must indeed give a practical demonstration of love in the midst of the differences. But at the same time God's truth and the work of Christ's church both insist that *truth demands loving confrontation, but confrontation*. And know that it is not as if we are talking about minor differences. The differences are already there in the evangelical world, and trying to cover them over is neither faithfulness to truth nor faithfulness to love.

There are three possible positions: 1) unloving confrontation; 2) no confrontation; and 3) loving confrontation. Only the third is biblical. And there must be hierarchy of priorities. All things may be important, but all are not on the same level of needing confrontation at a given time and place. The chasm is: not conforming to the world spirit of autonomous freedom in our age and obedience to God's Word. And this means living in obedience to the full inerrant authority of the Bible in the crucial moral and social issues of the day just as much as in the area of doctrine. Obedience to God's Word is the watershed. And the failure of the evangelical world to take a clear and distinctively

²² Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. P322. (*The Great Evangelical Disaster*)

²³ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p402 (*The Great Evangelical Disaster*)

biblical stand on the crucial issues of the day can only be seen as a failure to live under the full authority of God's Word in the full spectrum of life.²⁴

Finally, there are multiple areas which must be considered in our teaching and in truthful, compassionate apologetics which I have brought out in *Truth Admist Tension* that need to be considered as we model Dr. Schaeffer's apologetic:

- Having the compassion to listen and take questions
- Holding to True Truth, that is able to withstand questions
- Living this demonstration of truth
- Exhibiting beauty amidst tension
- Being the demonstration of Christ victory, affecting total culture

In closing, there are things in Dr. Schaeffer's apologetic that force understanding if we let it. The Christian cannot merely hold to arbitrary notions of "truth" and not acknowledge the base of the True-Truth. True-Truth, as we have mentioned, is the truth of the real world and the truth of ourselves that God had made and who God is. Therefore, every breath is under God's lordship and the truth of His revelation. The truth of God is also distinctly exhibited in His truth as a Creator/Artist. Thus, the Divine Artist has designed us as His workmanship. We are His art, and He requires the respect for all mankind made in the beauty of His image. It touches not only how we treat others as Christians, but also how we treat humanity and the compassion we feel for those who are lost. When we demonstrate the victory of the cross of Christ, as new creatures, loving one another and holding up to the highest acclaim the works of His hands, we honor our heavenly Father by both proclamation and service.

Finally, as we look at our culture and its ever increasing tensions with the world that God has made, we should be brought at times to tears. However, we should also avoid being paralyzed or overwhelmed, but rather realize that these are places where

²⁴ Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. p403 (*The Great Evangelical Disaster*)

Dr. Schaeffer says we can speak and introduce questions. This is the soil where True-Truth thrives!